

luring you to return, to try us once more. And I must tell you that you have come at the right moment, when I too have been longing intensely for a call from your world, for an opening door. But we'll talk about that next time. You've confided a great deal to me, friend, and I thank you for it. You will see that I too have some things to confess to you. It is late, you're leaving tomorrow, and another day of official routines awaits me. We must go to bed. But please give me another fifteen minutes."

He stood up, went to the window, and looked up at the starry, crystalline night sky overlaid by the scudding clouds. Since he did not return to his chair at once, his guest also stood up and came over to the window beside him. The Magister stood there, drinking in the cool, thin air of the autumnal night with rhythmic inhalations. He pointed toward the sky.

"Look," he said. "This landscape of clouds and sky. At first glance you might think that the depths are there where it is darkest; but then you realize that the darkness and softness are only the clouds and that the depths of the universe begin only at the fringes and fjords of this mountain range of clouds—solemn and supreme symbols of clarity and orderliness. The depths and the mysteries of the universe lie not where the clouds and blackness are; the depths are to be found in the spaces of clarity and serenity. Please, just before going to sleep look up for a while at these bays and straits again, with all their stars, and don't reject the ideas or dreams that come to you from them."

A strange quiver went through Plinio's heart—he could not tell whether it was of grief or happiness. An unimaginably long time ago, he recalled, in the lovely, serene beginnings of his life as a Waldzell student, he had been summoned in similar words to his first meditation exercises.

"And let me say one word more," the Glass Bead Game Master resumed, again in his low voice. "I would like to say something more to you about cheerful serenity, the serenity of the stars and of the mind, and about our Castalian kind of serenity also. You are averse to serenity, presumably

because you have had to walk the ways of sadness, and now all brightness and good cheer, especially our Castalian kind, strikes you as shallow and childish, and cowardly to boot, a flight from the terrors and abysses of reality into a clear, well-ordered world of mere forms and formulas, mere abstractions and refinements. But, my dear devotee of sadness, even though for some this may well be a flight, though there may be no lack of cowardly, timorous Castalians playing with mere formulas, even if the majority among us were in fact of this sort—all this would not lessen the value and splendor of genuine serenity, the serenity of the sky and the mind. Granted there are those among us who are too easily satisfied, who enjoy a sham serenity; but in contrast to them we also have men and generations of men whose serenity is not playful shallowness, but earnest depth. I knew one such man—I mean our former Music Master, whom you used to see in Waldzell now and then. In the last years of his life this man possessed the virtue of serenity to such a degree that it radiated from him like the light from a star; so much that it was transmitted to all in the form of benevolence, enjoyment of life, good humor, trust, and confidence. It continued to radiate outward from all who received it, all who had absorbed its brightness. His light shone upon me also; he transmitted to me a little of his radiance, a little of the brightness in his heart, and to our friend Ferromonte as well, and a good many others. To achieve this cheerful serenity is to me, and to many others, the finest and highest of goals. You will also find it among some of the patriarchs in the directorate of the Order. Such cheerfulness is neither frivolity nor complacency; it is supreme insight and love, affirmation of all reality, alertness on the brink of all depths and abysses; it is a virtue of saints and of knights; it is indestructible and only increases with age and nearness to death. It is the secret of beauty and the real substance of all art. The poet who praises the splendors and terrors of life in the dance-measures of his verse, the musician who sounds them in a pure, eternal present—these are bringers of light, increasers



of joy and brightness on earth, even if they lead us first through tears and stress. Perhaps the poet whose verses gladden us was a sad solitary, and the musician a melancholic dreamer; but even so their work shares in the cheerful serenity of the gods and the stars. What they give us is no longer their darkness, their suffering or fears, but a drop of pure light, eternal cheerfulness. Even though whole peoples and languages have attempted to fathom the depths of the universe in myths, cosmogonies, and religions, their supreme, their ultimate attainment has been this cheerfulness. You recall the ancient Hindus—our teacher in Waldzell once spoke so beautifully about them. A people of suffering, of brooding, of penance and asceticism; but the great ultimate achievements of their thought were bright and cheerful; the smile of the ascetics and the Buddhas are cheerful; the figures in their profound, enigmatic mythologies are cheerful. The world these myths represent begins divinely, blissfully, radiantly, with a springtime loveliness: the golden age. Then it sickens and degenerates more and more; it grows coarse and subsides into misery; and at the end of four ages, each lower than the others, it is ripe for annihilation. Therefore it is trampled underfoot by a laughing, dancing Siva—but it does not end with that. It begins anew with the smile of dreaming Vishnu whose hands playfully fashion a young, new, beautiful, shining world. It is wonderful—how these Indians, with an insight and capacity for suffering scarcely equalled by any other people, looked with horror and shame upon the cruel game of world history, the eternally revolving wheel of avidity and suffering; they saw and understood the fragility of created being, the avidity and diabolism of man, and at the same time his deep yearning for purity and harmony; and they devised these glorious parables for the beauty and tragedy of the creation: mighty Siva who dances the completed world into ruins, and smiling Vishnu who lies slumbering and playfully makes a new world arise out of his golden dreams of gods.

"But to return to our own, Castalian cheerfulness, it may be only a lateborn, lesser variety of this great universal serenity, but it is a completely legitimate form. Scholarship has not been cheerful always and everywhere, although it ought to be. But with us scholarship, which is the cult of truth, is closely allied to the cult of the beautiful, and allied also with the practice of spiritual refreshment by meditation. Consequently it can never entirely lose its serene cheerfulness. Our Glass Bead Game combines all three principles: learning, veneration of the beautiful, and meditation; and therefore a proper Glass Bead Game player ought to be drenched in cheerfulness as a ripe fruit is drenched in its sweet juices. He ought above all to possess the cheerful serenity of music, for after all music is nothing but an act of courage, a serene, smiling, striding forward and dancing through the terrors and flames of the world, the festive offering of a sacrifice. This kind of cheerful serenity is what I have been concerned with ever since I began dimly to sense its meaning during my student days, and I shall never again relinquish it, not even in unhappiness and suffering.

"We shall go to sleep now, and tomorrow morning you are leaving. Come back soon, tell me more about yourself, and I shall begin to tell you, too. You will hear that even in Waldzell and even in the life of a Magister there are doubts, disappointments, despairs, and dangerous passions. But now I want you to take an ear filled with music to bed with you. A glance into the starry sky and an ear filled with music is a better prelude to sleep than all your sedatives."

He sat down and carefully, very softly, played a movement from the Purcell sonata which was one of Father Jacobus's favorite pieces. The notes fell into the stillness like drops of golden light, so softly that along with them the song of the old fountain in the yard could be heard. Gently, austere, sparingly, sweetly, the lovely separate voices met and mingled; bravely and gaily they paced their tender rondo through the void of time and transitoriness, for a